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SUBJECT: SRSG MELKERT DISCUSSES IRAQ-SYRIA RELATIONS AND
DISPUTED AREAS

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Gary A. Grappo for reasons
1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. During a September 26 meeting with CDA Haslach and A/DCM Grappo, SRSG Ad Melkert assessed the role the UN might play in Iraqi-Syrian relations and in transitioning the Mujahideen-e-Khalq's (MEK) presence in Iraq. Melkert emphasized the need for broad regional and international support in assisting Iraq with these matters, and underscored his view that UNAMI cannot act alone. He said he had not made a decision yet on the Ambassador's request that his Special Advisor for Northern Affairs be added as an observer to regular meetings of the High Level Task Force (HLTF) on disputed internal areas. The SRSG's comments on the MEK are reported septel. The SRSG's comments to the Charge on the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) are also reported septel. END SUMMARY.

Little More than Elections in the Near Term

12. (C) Melkert agreed with A/DCM Grappo's assessment, based on a comment that PM Maliki shared with the Ambassador last week, that "nothing will happen before elections." Melkert, however, mused that there could be movement on some key issues after the elections, even during the transition, given that many of the "same faces" will be around. A/DCM cautioned that it may be more likely that no one coalition will win a majority of the votes, and the election could result in a "political soup" of political players that would take months to organize. Melkert agreed with A/DCM that, either way, Iraqis will need a strategy for forming partnerships that will keep them from working at cross purposes.

UNAMI Mulling Role of HLTF

13. (C) Melkert told CDA and A/DCM that UNAMI is still mulling over the Ambassador's recent request that the U.S. Special Advisor for Northern Affairs be added to the regular meetings of the High Level Task Force (HLTF). The SRSG said that UNAMI is in the process of carefully considering what they want to achieve through the HLTF process both before and after the elections. A/DCM reported that the U.S. Special Advisor has been meeting with key leaders in the region with the aim of reducing anxiety over the U.S. security plan. Melkert said that he plans to make his first visits to Kirkuk and Mosul within the next two weeks would meet with the Ambassador's Special Advisor then.

Syria

14. (C) Melkert told CDA and A/DCM that Iraq has again asked the Secretary General in New York to consider appointing a

special envoy to look at interference by other states in Iraq. He reported that while the UN is in general favorably disposed toward Iraq, many do not see a specific role for UNAMI in fulfilling the mandate of such an envoy. Melkert shared his personal assessment that "there is not a lot of appetite" in the UN Security Council for this effort. Instead, he suggested, he would prefer to see what Turkey and the Arab League offer; he sensed they were trying to broker an arrangement, though Iraq remained skeptical and Syria continued appear uncooperative. A/DCM said that he heard that the UN was already working to identify an envoy.

15. (C) Melkert emphasized that UNAMI intends to uphold its current mandate, including that of facilitating regional dialogue. He cautioned against other processes that might draw UNAMI away from other important priorities such as projects for water, trade and development. A/DCM quickly agreed that these efforts, as well as UNAMI's ongoing work on the Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) and elections, should not be sidetracked by new initiatives.
HASLACH